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COURT INTERPRETERS OFFERED TRAINING BY STATE COURT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

LANSING, MI, December 12, 2001– The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), the administrative arm of the Michigan Supreme Court, has developed a state-level testing and certification program for foreign language interpreters in the courts.

"This is an exciting new profession, and courts and other governmental agencies have an increasing need for people who can serve as interpreters," said Pamela Creighton, administrator of the SCAO's Access To Justice Programs.

Creighton explained that "not everyone who is bilingual is qualified to be an interpreter. The interpreter certification program is similar to the program already in place for certifying court reporters: to make sure that the person is truly qualified to interpret for the litigant and the court."

Under Michigan law, in criminal cases involving non-English-speaking defendants, the court must appoint an interpreter if the court determines the defendant cannot adequately understand the proceedings and participate in the defense. The average rate of pay for interpreters in Michigan courts is \$40 per hour.

As part of the certification project, the SCAO will be conducting a basic orientation and skill building training program for bi-lingual persons who may be interested in becoming court interpreters. Two programs will be offered in late January 2002. The first program will be held in Lansing on January 22 and 23rd and will be for Spanish language interpreters only. The second program will be offered in Detroit on January 24 and 25th at the 36th District Court. This second program is for all languages.

Nationally recognized experts and federally certified interpreters will conduct the orientation programs, Creighton noted. Creighton has been working with the National Center for State Courts to develop the Michigan testing and certification program since September 1999, when the SCAO became one of the now-28 member states of the NCSC Consortium For State Court Interpreter Certification.

Training participants will receive an introduction to court interpretation; a review of national models, ethics, and procedures; participate in self-assessment and interpretation exercises; become familiar with the modes of simultaneous and consecutive modes of interpretation; and take a mock test.

The SCAO currently tests for Spanish and Arabic languages. "The certification program may add some additional languages, in particular Vietnamese, during the 2002 program year," Creighton stated.

The deadline for registering for the court interpreter orientation programs is January 10, 2002. For more information, contact Ms. Linda Hill at (517) 373-6670.
